

*By the same Author*

INSIDE EUROPE (130th thousand)

INSIDE ASIA (40th thousand)

# THE HIGH COST OF HITLER

by  
JOHN GUNTHER



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90 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON

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## FOREWORD

THIS book consists of the broadcasts I made from various points in Europe to the United States, through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company, during the past agitated summer up to the outbreak of war. Originally I planned a series to be called "Inside Europe Revisited"; I wanted to describe consecutively the impressions I got of Paris, Berlin, Danzig, Warsaw, Moscow, London, and several of the neutral capitals. But the tremendous hammer of events hit me half way through. It knocked my pace, my itinerary, into a cocked hat.

I print these broadcasts exactly as they were spoken, except that I have corrected a few verbal slips, and cut some material towards the end that seems out of place now. Also, in its original form, the text was in some cases longer than my time on the air allowed; as I spoke I had to cut or compress some paragraphs; these paragraphs are now restored. I have not changed any opinion or prophecy. I wish I could.

As I write this foreword Europe is adjusting itself to the shock of unexampled catastrophe.

Poland has been crushed, in fact all but obliterated, in three weeks. We do not know where the Germans will strike next. Perhaps, with Russian help, they will proceed to consolidate their position in eastern Europe; perhaps they will attack Rumania, and feed this winter on Rumanian oil, Rumanian grain. On the other hand they may strike towards the west, possibly through Holland and Belgium, in an overwhelming attempt to crush France and Britain as they crushed Poland, to end the war before the Allies can begin it.

Enigmas write themselves everywhere. Events of the most extraordinary nature take place in the east; but the west remains almost ominously quiet. It's a very odd war indeed. A great many people expected it to begin with mass destruction of the great cities, lightning air raids on London, on Paris, on Berlin. This has not happened, as yet, largely of course through fear of retaliation on each side, and hesitation to be the first to bomb civilians. The British and French have been unable to give even indirect help to Poland, because of the necessity to retain full armed guard in the west.

The greatest enigma has to do with unpredictable Russia. We do not know whether the Russians will, on the one hand, attempt to restrain Hitler from further conquest, or, on the other hand, join him to divide the spoils. The Russians

and Germans may quarrel in time; or they may continue to co-operate. My own guess is that they will continue to co-operate. This is because seemingly the Russians serve both their nationalist and internationalist (i.e. revolutionary) interests by assisting in the further collapse of the European structure. They see the Germans playing their own game, the Russian game, in attacking western capitalism. Also the Germans may be helping, inadvertently perhaps, to pave the way for revolution, inside Germany as well as out.

This is a war in which the neutral states will play a very great role indeed. One might almost say that the most interesting thing about this war is the number of countries not yet in it. We called it the second world war too glibly. Only five European countries are fighting. Of course many more may be involved later. At the moment Germany is greatly aided by the fact that it is almost completely ringed with neutrals—not merely the traditional neutral states like Denmark, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, but states that were combatants in the last great war, that is Belgium, Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary. This ring of neutrals makes full blockade of Germany difficult. On the other hand, the French and British are well served by the neutrality of several states.

Fundamentally, I think, this war is a struggle between Great Britain and Germany for the

hegemony of Europe. Two paramount weapons will be blockade, that is to say starvation, and propaganda. Already a double war of blockade has begun. The Germans are trying to starve Britain out; and the British are trying to starve Germany out. But the Germans are starved, not merely for butter, but for news. So the British will, I imagine, try to pump news into Germany, that is to say propaganda, while they try to keep raw materials and munitions out. The best hope for the allies is a crack in the German home front, however long it may take to come.

My thanks go to Mr. John Royal, Mr. Fred Bate, Mr. Max Jordan, and Mr. Paul Archinard, all of the National Broadcasting Company, who helped make what work I did possible.

J. G.

*London, 21 September, 1939.*



# I

## FRANCE GETTING READY

*Paris, July 9, 1939*

GOOD evening, everybody I've just returned to Europe after three years away I'm revisiting Paris and other capitals to find out what Europeans inside Europe are thinking about Europe is a rather smoky continent just now Everyone here asks two questions first Will there be a war? What will France do? To-night I would like to summarize briefly what, in this critical time, the French position seems to be

Paris is as gracious, as brilliant, as *chic* as ever The streets glow with light, the restaurants glow with colour and animation The French people, with their wonderful sense of balance, their essential prudence, their instinct to harmony, are living the same good lives they have always lived Paris hasn't changed much—on the surface Paris is still the city where elevators with passengers run only one way—up—and where every taxi driver is an extreme individualist But behind the surface glitter, the charm and elegance, is a grey shadow—something altogether new since my last visit here It's the ominous grey shadow of war—fear of war

Day before yesterday walking down the Champs

·Elysées I heard a sound that split the Paris sky. I thought first it might be a taxi in spontaneous combustion. But the sound kept on sounding. I learned that it was the siren—the air raid alarm—that goes off every Thursday at noon—once a week. The echoes rolled from Notre Dame to the Arc de Triomphe and bounced back again. But no one paid the slightest attention. Yesterday I saw part of the gas mask distribution in Neuilly, but during the alarm no one acted in alarming terms. No one sought out the new shelters—  
· which are placed very inconspicuously. This leads to one point I want to make. Beclouding everything is fear of war. The French are realists. They do not, like so many people, have a great disinclination to admit the obvious, simply because the obvious is so horrible. The French know that a very serious crisis indeed is looming. But—and it is an important but—they are not demoralized. They are not even nervous. I even heard it said, in the good, somewhat cynical French way, that the real reason for the Thursday siren is to see if the siren itself still works. The French are so casual—in spite of the big new signs in every building with instructions in case of air attack—that the visitor is almost bewildered. But the French do things in their own special way. A recent cartoon showed two people dancing on a volcano. “Why not?” the text said. “After all,

a volcano is no place just to sit down on." When they speak of war most Parisians shrug their shoulders with a kind of contemptuous fortitude. If it comes, we are ready, is what they say.

Talk of war dominates almost all conversation, of course. An American friend told me this morning that he had mentioned to a French politician that he was going on a Baltic cruise for his summer holiday. "In what?" asked the politician, "a Russian submarine?" When people make plans for house parties or vacations in August or September, they agree to meet, and then say H.P.—which means, Hitler Permitting. Yesterday, I believe, news came that Mr. Hitler had just retired to his mountain chalet, Berchtesgaden. This really did give the French a chill—worse than the chill caused by Danzig crisis last week-end. Every time Hitler goes to Berchtesgaden, my French friends say, he goes there to brood, and when that complicated man, that somnambulist, that sub-Napoleon, starts brooding, no one knows what may be born. Yet—again—I want to make very clear that the French attitude is not one of uncontrolled agitation or alarm. The French are worried, as every sensible person must be worried, but they are calm. There is no slightest sign of panic here.

There's only one problem in Europe to-day—the German problem. Only Germany can make

a war. But it is quite in the nature of things to discuss this problem from France, from this broadcasting station on the Boulevard Hausmann, because France is the heart of the democratic system in Europe, the heart of much that is fine and beautiful in European civilization. And it is against France that the brunt of the attack will come eventually—if it comes. For a time, perplexed by this perpetual German menace, the French were irresolute. Now more and more people are coming to agree with a remark by Clemenceau—"If you make concessions to Germany, war will come in twenty years. If you make no concessions, it will come in forty years"—that is, you will have twenty more years of peace.

There has been great recovery in France in the past six months. French morale has reasserted itself, after a period of disintegration and defeatism. I asked my friends to tell me how they accounted for this revival, and to describe its characteristic

Second, there has been a remarkable political integration. Hitler has to his credit a paradoxical achievement. He has accomplished just that which he would like to prevent—the political unification of France. M. Daladier, the Prime Minister, rules with extraordinary powers, though he is not a dictator. He is safe in office until November. He has the support of almost everybody from extreme right to moderate left.

Third, the military position has greatly improved. The French Army is still probably the best in Europe. It lacks some equipment, particularly certain types of artillery, and aircraft production is not what it might be. But production of military 'planes has jumped from about 70 per month a year ago to about 300 a month now. The morale of the army is superb. The other day a detachment of Alpine Chasseurs marched 52 miles in 30 hours, officers and all, which is a record. The Maginot line is fully manned. The French don't want to fight—they will never provoke a war, since they have nothing to gain by making one—but if war comes, they will resist.

War costs money. So does fear of war. And so does military preparation on the vast scale entailed by the present crisis. I was shocked to discover that, of the ordinary French budget of sixty billion francs, not less than one half is for

defence. In addition there is an extraordinary budget of thirty billion francs, all of which goes to defence. So the French are spending—are being forced to spend—actually two thirds of their entire national revenue on fear of war. This is a staggering phenomenon. One can only despair and wonder how long it can keep up. Thank several bitter centuries of history for it—plus old imperial greeds—plus Mr. Hitler.

I mentioned M. Daladier, the Prime Minister a few moments ago. I've seen a good many French politicians in the past few days, and yesterday I had a talk with M. Daladier. He is Minister of War as well as Prime Minister. I met him in his office in the War Ministry. He sat in Clemenceau's old room—not an uninteresting juxtaposition. Let me try to give some sort of picture of M. Daladier, on whom the destiny of France—and a good deal else—may depend.

He is a small man, about 55, chunky, with a broad chin, heavy shoulders, and very bright blue eyes. He has plenty of humour; he talks brightly and with a great sense of the concrete; he is a practical man, with a distaste for theories; he gives a considerable impression of stubbornness of shrewdness too. Daladier is a peasant. His father was a baker. He comes from Vaucluse, in the extreme south of France; he is not Parisian by origin or temperament; he didn't associate with

dislikes the ostentatious. Like so many American politicians, he is a self-made man; he worked his way through school, and then became a teacher. He entered politics in 1919, and for a time was a professor of history. His speciality was the history of the middle ages. Since 1933 he has been intermittently Minister of War; he is now Prime Minister for the third time.

Daladier's sources of power are several. For one thing there is his peasant origin. This means that he is tenacious, a lover of the soil, a simple man. Also, like most peasants, he is rather suspicious, with his collar buttoned up to his chin, as the French say. He receives very few people—even his own ministers find it hard sometimes to get to him—and he hates unnecessary conversation. Another Prime Minister, Herriot, once made sixty speeches in a year; in the same period Daladier made exactly three. Again, as a peasant, he is an individualist and a democrat; he believes in property; he believes in what he has, and wants to hold it.

Another source of Daladier's power is, it goes without saying, his close association with the army. Another is the fact that he is president of the greatest party in France—the radical socialist party, which—French nomenclature being what it is—is neither radical nor socialist. M. Daladier was, however, one of the first leaders of the Front



Populaire, the leftist coalition which ruled France for two years. To be a radical socialist means, in reality, to be an average Frenchman, which Daladier emphatically is. Not only does he represent the average man, he *is* the average man. I asked one of his closest collaborators yesterday what M. Daladier believed in most—what his fundamental faith was. M. Daladier believes in three things, came the reply: in France, in the average Frenchman, and in himself.

In the past few days I've asked everyone I met one double question: Can war be prevented? Can peace be saved? The answers boil down to this: Peace can be saved—probably—if Hitler can be persuaded that he would lose the war, that is, if Hitler is convinced that the forces confronting him are stronger than he is. The French don't like Hitler. But they don't think he is a fool. From every rational point of view, Hitler should know that even if he won spectacular victories at first, he would lose the war in the long run, and that neither he nor his regime could survive defeat. Therefore, many Frenchmen say, if the democratic powers really put up a strong and determined front, if they really show that they mean business, Hitler—unless he wants to commit suicide—won't fight.

The French see two dangers. One is that Hitler may be misinformed, that he may not be

properly cognizant of the strength of Britain are France. I heard it said that Herr von Ribbentrop, Hitler's Foreign Minister, is the most dangerous man in Europe to-day—because Hitler gets most of his information from him, and Ribbentrop is still supposed to be telling him that the British won't fight, no matter what happens. Perhaps Ribbentrop is right. But the French don't think so. They deeply fear that Hitler may make a terrible miscalculation, that he may take Danzig thinking that he can get away with it, thinking that there will be no war over Danzig, that the British and French will *not* fight. And the French say they will fight, and the British too. The second danger that the French envisage is complete failure of the Russian negotiations, which are stalemated at present. I have only a very few moments left; I wish I could crowd into them the detailed story of this peculiar stalemate. The Russians are, of course, asking a stiff price for their help. The price is a complete guarantee of the Baltic states, not merely from external but from internal aggression. This means, presumably, that the Russians would step in to "protect" Finland, Esthonia and Latvia if there should ever be a *coup d'état* in these countries that they dislike. The Baltic states don't want this guarantee, and the French and British find it very difficult to concede it. But the French know

22 if the war—if it comes—will be a very serious affair indeed, without Russian help in the east; they know, moreover, that if the Russian negotiations fail, this may give impetus in England to "appeasement," to the sentiment that wishes to placate Hitler at any cost.

One word on Danzig, which is the chief danger point at the moment. The great crisis over Danzig will come, the French think, in late summer. The position is this. The Germans will not, of course, invade Danzig, but instead will make a peaceful *Putsch* there—peaceful in quotes—from inside. Thus the Poles will have to take the onus of starting actual hostilities. The Poles insist that they will fight if any such *Putsch* occurs. And the French and British are bound by their recent agreements to support the Poles. Probably what Hitler will do is make a *Putsch* by degrees—that is possible—so that the Poles will never have a clear position to fight on.

Looking beyond Danzig, looking at the whole situation with as broad perspective as possible, most Frenchmen think that the price of peace—permanent peace—is German domination of the continent of Europe. This presents them with a terrible choice. Either to purchase peace by more and more concessions to Hitler, or make war to stop him. Either choice means a shocking, catastrophic loss in human values—and the

French, a profoundly civilized people, admire human values. Either kill a million young men in warfare, to say nothing of women and children, or surrender most of Europe to slow death, the slow death of Fascism.

On the other hand there is a third alternative. It is at least—still—a possibility. It is that somehow, somehow, the situation can be frozen in more or less its present form. Count on the fact that Hitler must know—if he has any reason at all—that a war will destroy him; count on the fact that French unity and British rearmament—plus collaboration with Russia if it comes—may restrain him from the final ghastly plunge. In effect Hitler has Danzig already. No Germans are being mistreated there. He can't claim, as he did in regard to the Sudetenland, that the German minority is being suppressed. The French hope that Hitler can be persuaded that what he has is enough. Prophecy is extremely difficult, not to say risky. Almost everyone here thinks that there will be a great crisis this summer; they hope profoundly that it can be overcome without war. But rather than give way too much, the French will fight.

### III

## POLAND, THE HEART OF THE STORM

*Warsaw, August 13, 1939.*

GOOD evening, everybody. I saw one of the most interesting men in Europe the other day. I had a long talk with him. His name is Beck—Colonel Joseph Beck. He's the Foreign Minister of Poland, and incidentally the senior Foreign Minister of Europe. Colonel Beck is interesting—and important—for a very important reason, in that Polish foreign policy has become something that concerns every man and woman in Europe—perhaps in America too. As you all know, Poland stands geographically between Germany and the Soviet Union. It is the heart of the European crisis. Colonel Beck is the moving spirit inside that heart. As you all know, Germany has recently advanced certain claims towards the *Free State of Danzig*. This *Free State*, created by the peace treaties twenty years ago, controls Poland's outlet to the sea. For other reasons too it is of exceptional importance to Polish prestige and security. If the Germans attempt to make an adventure in Danzig—the sort of adventure we are only too familiar with—Poland would presumably consider it a threat to her independence, and would reply by force of

arms. If so, Great Britain and France are pledged to support Poland. And it is *Poland* that decides when her independence is threatened. In other words, a European war might very well come if the Germans do attack Danzig. The man who will bear the brunt of deciding when Polish independence is threatened, who will have to decide whether or not Poland shall fight—and presumably England and France—is Colonel Beck. It might fairly be said that Colonel Beck has the future of Europe in his hands. The tremendous question of peace or war may rest on his decision.

I saw Colonel Beck in his country house a few hours from Warsaw. It is in the very centre of the great Polish plain. Peasants were gathering in the last of the harvest. I saw geese and pigs browsing on the roadside—soon to turn into admirable Polish *pâté de foie gras* and superlative Polish ham. The occasion was quite informal. I talked with Colonel Beck a while, and then had dinner with him and his family. Any cook would have been proud to have produced that dinner. Poland has good things to eat.

Beck is a tall man, rather handsome, very dark, with the carriage of an athlete. He has a big beaked nose, and rather pointed ears—Mephistophelian ears, I thought. He is a grave person, very reserved, rather saturnine. He smiles little.

We were sitting around the living-room. His two nieces were mending a tennis net, and his wife was playing with one of the dogs. Old friends of the family joined the circle. But I noticed how Beck sat alone, reserved, concentrated, moody, in front of the big mantelpiece.

A sudden storm came up. All the lights were out. There was animation and laughter as the girls brought candles.

Beck is a person of great force of character. He shows his friends what they considered to be the limits of his power. For one thing, of course, his intimacy with the national sense of Poland. Another, his astuteness and diplomatic skill.

Every time a crisis comes, Poland takes the lead. After the *Anschluss* crisis, Beck showed that Poland regularized its lack of relations with Lithuanians. During the Sudeten crisis, Beck took the initiative for the re-acquisition of Teschen. During the March crisis this year, which brought the end of Czechoslovakia, Beck's policy encouraged the Hungarians to acquire part of Ruthenia.

For many years, as everyone knows, Polish foreign policy had a predominantly French orientation. Then came Hitler. The Polish Government of that day—this is more or less an open secret—proposed strong measures to the French Government to squash Hitler then and there. But the



French refused. Again in 1936, when Hitler took the Rhineland, Poland wanted to march. The French wouldn't. So Colonel Beck carefully, guardedly, opened a phase of good relations between Poland and Germany. This lasted roughly from 1934 to March of this year. Then Hitler tore up the ten-year non-aggression treaty he had made with Poland. So now Poland stands more closely with France—and Great Britain—than it has ever stood before.

The main impression I got from Colonel Beck was that Poland did not want war, but that if it came the country was ready for it. He indicated very clearly that he does not think it will serve any useful purpose to make any more unilateral concessions to Germany. He still thinks peace can be saved. But he does not intend to do any knuckling down. If Polish independence is threatened, he will fight for it. He told me, "We have a line from which we cannot retreat."

I wish he had said with absolute precision what this line was, in other words, exactly what Poland would consider a *casus belli*. He did not think it would be wise to do so. From other persons, however, I have a pretty good idea what this line is. It is that Poland will not tolerate, first, any change in Danzig's status as a Free State, second, any interference with the customs union between Poland and Danzig, third, any

interference with Polish shipping and railway rights.

Let me try to give you some picture of what Warsaw looks like, feels like, to-day. Outside my hotel room—it's very hot, and the sun is streaming in—is a very large open square, known as Pilsudski Platz. Bounding it on one side is the Foreign Office—Beck's office. Near by is the tomb of the Polish Unknown Soldier, where a bright gusty flame is always lit. The Foreign Office is one of the most charming buildings I know—a gem of the purest baroque architecture. It breathes the spirit of an ancient, graceful past. But inside—I was much impressed by this—it has been redecorated in an extremely modern style. It is all flat surfaces and mirror-like marble. It looks like a very handsome—what shall I say?—railway station. This contrast is rather instructive. It tells us something about Poland. The contrast between old and new is strikingly typical of Polish institutions. Here is one of the most ancient of nations, one of the most romantic and pictorial nations, being built over into a modern machine. Poland jumps the gamut from medievalism to the twentieth century, from chain mail and baroque palaces to machine-guns and air-conditioning, almost overnight.

I don't think everyone back home realizes the beam and bulk—the impressive physical dimen-

sions—of this Polish nation Poland has 35,000,000 people. It is quite true, of course, that not all are Poles. The population increases by 400,000 persons a year, and 70 per cent of all the people are under forty years of age. It's a young nation. Poland is the sixth largest country in Europe, it has more radio sets than Italy, more railway mileage than Spain. It is entirely self-sufficient in regard to food, and 58 per cent of the land is owned by peasants and small farmers. Its Baltic port, Gdynia, adjacent to Danzig, was a fishing village fifteen years ago, with 400 inhabitants, now it is the first port on the Baltic, the fifth in Europe, with 150,000 people and a freight business of 10,000,000 tons a year.

One thing of particular interest—quite new since my last trip here—is the development of what is known as the Central Industrial Region. This is a triangle between Lublin, Cracow, and Lvov, a good distance away from the German frontier, and not so exposed to military attack as the Poznen and Silesia industrial areas. Here, in this new triangle, Poland is seeking to produce the wherewithal for war. Romanticism is not enough in these critical days. You can't fight a tank by whistling at it. So Poland has built new steel towns, new chemical towns, and a big plant called Kerr, which makes rubber out of potatoes.

All this costs money. Poland must spend a great deal of money for the import of vital raw materials—also it must pay the very serious cost of mobilization. A word on military matters. Poland has almost 1,000,000 men under arms and the number of Poles fit for military service is 6,500,000; not less than 4,500,000 trained reservists can be called up. Poland makes her own guns, tanks, and so on; it is even exporting anti-aircraft guns to England; London is partly defended by Polish guns. Polish aircraft production is, I am told, about 300 per month, and all told there are said to be 1,500 'planes. The army is particularly notable for its mobility. It emphasizes cavalry. But one should not think of this Polish cavalry in the sense of brightly uniformed hussars carrying lances; on the contrary it is a kind of mobile infantry, using horses instead of cars. This is necessary in country where roads are bad.

What does Colonel Beck stand for? Poland. What does Poland stand for? The answer is the same—Poland. Here is the most tenacious nationalism in Europe. But what makes Poland, as it were, tick? What is the source of authority in this Polish state? What is the central basis of power? Is it the old aristocracy? The bankers? The army? The church?

I asked this question of a good many Polish friends, and the unanimity of answer was remark-

able. The central source of power and authority in Poland is a dead man. This may sound a paradox. But it isn't. I refer, of course, to the late Marshal Pilsudski, the founder and recreator of the modern Polish nation. It is the spirit of the dead Pilsudski that is the central faith of Poland. Pilsudski was one of the most remarkable men who ever lived. When the Great War broke out in 1914 he organized the Polish Legion, which set out to liberate Poland from Russian—and German—domination, to make Polish independence possible. This Legion began with 300 men. With 300 men, Pilsudski set out to attack—attack, mind you—the colossal force of Russia. Practically everyone of importance in the life of Poland to-day was a member of this extraordinary Legion. The Legionnaires were Pilsudski's young men; they fought for four years against both Russians and Germans; they took Poland in charge in 1919, and have been running it ever since. The old Legion is the fountain head of Polish political life. Colonel Beck is a Legionnaire. So is the Prime Minister, General Skladkowski. So is Marshal Smigly-Ridz, the leader of the Polish armed forces. So is practically every important Polish general, cabinet minister, public official.

I've talked to a lot of people since arriving here. Not merely to men in public jobs. I've tried to talk to taxi drivers, hotel porters, servants.

The closeness of national spirit, the sense of patriotic unity, is tremendous. I had ten minutes with a customs inspector yesterday. It struck me very much that he expressed not merely the same ideas as Colonel Beck; he used virtually the identical language—the same words. He said, "We don't want to fight. But if we have to fight, we certainly will." Poland won't give up independence without a struggle. Poland *will* fight to preserve itself. There is no fear of Germany here. Fear of Germany exists almost everywhere else, but not in Poland.

I heard one relevant anecdote. A youthful recruit asked an officer, "How many people have we?" The answer came "35,000,000." Then he asked, "How many have the Germans?" The answer came, "80,000,000." "That's easier than I thought," the soldier replied. "One Pole to every two and a half Germans. Simple!"

I mentioned a few moments ago the big square outside my hotel. It is empty. It is one of the emptiest squares I have ever seen. And thereby hangs a Polish tale. On this square—in the days before 1914 when most of Poland belonged to Tsarist Russia—a big Russian church stood there. The Poles resented this. It was a symbol of oppression. The Poles said, "When this church is finished, there will come retribution to the Russians." And—behold!—on the day the

church was at last finished, the Great War broke out Poland became independent of the Tsars And, I need hardly add, the church is no longer there The square is one of the emptiest I have ever seen It is deliberately left empty

There are two rather awkward questions one can ask the Poles One is whether or not they fear that, in the event of a Danzig crisis, Great Britain and France might try to wriggle out of their pledge to fight for Poland Great Britain has given Poland virtually a blank cheque Will the British honour it—no matter at what price? The Poles think she will The other question is whether or not the Poles will accept military aid from the Soviet Union In the event of war, Russian assistance might be valuable—to say the least But the Poles don't want Russian forces—or any foreign troops—to enter their territory This question is as yet undecided It is a very important question

Night before last I went to Danzig I must confess I was rather amused at the sign outside the sleeping car, which reads "Warsaw—Hel" I thought I was going somewhere hotter even than Warsaw But this Hel is the name of the hook of land branching out above Gdynia, into the Baltic, and commanding the Danzig shore The Poles have fortified it heavily I haven't much time to talk about Danzig But I must say

one thing. A few weeks ago I talked about Germany; I mentioned how tranquil, how orderly and peaceful, the Rhineland seemed. I got a quite different impression from Danzig. It is not part of Germany, but it is more German than Germany. Danzig is full of smoke—emotional smoke; it is full of shirts—brown and black; it is full of trucks and cannon; it is full of officers in Reichswehr uniform; it is full of nerves, spy fever, uneasiness.

The gist of the Danzig situation is, it seems to me, this. The Germans, who already had complete political control, began a few months ago to militarize the area. Troops arrived; guns arrived. Things seemed to be pointing towards a sudden *Putsch*—a seizure of the town. Danzig has great importance to Germany, especially from the point of view of prestige. It is an issue on which almost all Germans are united. Danzig is, incontestably, a German city. But what was in the German mind was not so much Danzig itself, and the return of some 400,000 Germans to the Reich, as what it would represent politically and diplomatically—a new successful adventure for Hitler, a serious setback to Poland, and a point of approach towards the Polish Corridor, which separates East Prussia from the rest of the Reich.

The Germans increased their pressure, and the Poles then stiffened. There was a nasty little



crisis last week-end in regard to customs inspectors. The Poles stiffened again. The Germans had to give way. Now the Germans are in a position of not knowing quite what to do. They had hopes of proclaiming the union of Danzig with the Reich before the summer was over. It was anticipated that Hitler himself would come to Danzig, possibly to proclaim the union. But apparently he has given up the idea. The Germans know that Poland will resist. Therefore, unless they wish to provoke warfare, they must recede. But it is extremely difficult for them to recede completely, because they have so often committed themselves to victory on the Danzig issue.

A final word. It is always Hitler's tactics to try to do things by degrees. He will try to wear down Polish nerves, to assume that the expense of continued Polish mobilization will be too much. It is possible that the militarization of Danzig will continue gradually, in the hope that Poland will not have a clear line on which to make a final decisive protest. But the Poles are confident that they can withstand any such campaign. They are resting on their position. To conclude, the situation is a nervous stalemate. On the whole, I think that a peaceful solution is still possible.

# IV

## RETURN TO ENGLAND

*London, August 27, 1939.*

Good evening, everybody. I've just got here from Russia and Eastern Europe. I stepped off the 'plane an hour ago. Things seem reasonably tranquil here in London, but there was certainly plenty of excitement along my route. They told me in Stockholm this morning that I was the last passenger on the last 'plane to leave Sweden. When we took off we did not know if we could get beyond Copenhagen. We avoided Germany—the Germans have severely restricted civil aviation over their territory—and flew mostly over the North Sea.

I've seldom seen such excitement as at the airports on route. They were all thronged with bright holiday crowds, on the roofs, watching the big incessant 'planes come and go. At Copenhagen, three air-liners arrived within a few moments of each other, all carrying people out of Poland. There were lines of people, some of them sobbing, pleading for places on the 'planes.

Coming near London the stewardess pointed out something novel. At least novel to me. In almost every park, in every green space, we could see far below what seemed to be big silver beetles.

These are the balloons which are to protect London if air-raids come They're ready for immediate release

The British, as always, combine humour and a certain healthy phlegmatic quality I asked the policeman at Croydon what had happened during the day He replied, "Nothing much We're bright and cheery here We 'ave him where we want 'im " He meant Hitler of course Then my taxi driver said, "We can't back down this time And we won't "

The present situation, it seems to me, is that a period of bargaining has begun, in circumstances of armed truce Hitler has apparently offered terms The British Cabinet is considering them Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador to Berlin, will soon fly back to Germany to present Hitler with the British reply This period of bargaining, this truce, may last a day, it may last several days, it might even—conceivably—last several weeks, as did the crisis last September

Usually when two sides set out to bargain, they tend at the beginning to overstate their several cases And Hitler's terms, as reported here to-day, are obviously extreme terms On the other hand, it's interesting to point out that Hitler seldom asks for more than he wants to get His general line has always been to state his minimum, and then set out to get it This is a factor for danger.

In general one can say this. By his astounding pact with Russia, Hitler intended to squeeze Danzig out of Poland. But the British and French, to say nothing of the Poles, made such promise of stiff resistance that Hitler hesitated. It's difficult for him to back down. On the other hand, it is, I really think, impossible for the British to back down.

The best hope of compromise seems to me to be this. It is that Hitler's people, the German people, do not want war. They want peace. Hitler doesn't, I really think, have to excuse himself to them, for making a peaceful settlement. So the question of prestige is, perhaps, not so important as we think. One of the wisest diplomats in Europe pointed out the other day that Hitler's prestige rests on the concept of victory *without* war. The question at stake is: can Hitler, now, win any more victories without provoking conflict.

People are beginning to get fed up—to put it mildly—with Hitler's well-known tactics. No one here wants war. But no one wants another Munich either.

*London, August 28, 1939.*

Good evening, everybody. I've tried to give this broadcast—or something like it—twice before. But in both Riga and Tallin—in fact everywhere in Eastern Europe—the lines were cut.

I've just completed what might be called a private encirclement of Mr. Hitler. In the past six weeks I've visited every country surrounding Germany, as well as Germany itself and the Soviet Union. It's a long list of countries—from Holland and Belgium, down through France and Switzerland, across Yugoslavia and Hungary and Poland, and then the Baltic States and Denmark. Germany covers a lot of ground. It adjoins thirteen different countries. The main impression I get from this encirclement is that this crisis is not merely a terribly dangerous crisis but a terribly stupid crisis. No one wants war. The shopkeepers in Amsterdam, the peasants harvesting wheat in Belgian fields; they want peace. The conductor in the train to Luxembourg; the Italian boatman on the Lido; they want peace. In Hungary and Poland I talked to housewives, to telegraph clerks, to waiters in the coffee houses; they want peace. Yesterday, flying across the

Baltic, I stopped for a moment in a Finnish town, the pretty girls swimming on that golden beach wanted peace, so did the shipmasters in their old schooners. Everywhere, in every country, the common people want peace. But everywhere, in every country, they are faced with war. They don't want war. But maybe war is what they are going to get.

I have fairly strong feelings about self-determination, but flying down from Stockholm to day I thought that nationalism can certainly be carried to excess. You can't tell the difference, crossing from Sweden to Denmark to Germany to Holland, between one country and the next. The greenish-brown fields are the same, the red brick houses, the slate roofs, the bicycles, are the same. It all seems part of a common whole, a common organism. You can't tell frontiers apart—from the air. But you certainly have to learn to tell them apart, on earth.

Another thing about this crisis is that it is not merely terribly dangerous, but in some respects totally ludicrous. Some of it makes no sense. What is going on seems to be a revolt against reason. Here we have the Russians, on one day signing up with the Germans—brown shirts getting red, and red shirts getting brown, so to speak—and simultaneously the Moscow radio urges the Czech subjects of Germany to rise

against their oppressors, in case of war between Germany and Poland. Think of the position of Japan. The Japanese lined up with Hitler, against Russia, but now Russia and Germany are becoming virtual allies, sisters under their shirts. The Japanese are stupefied, even as you and I. And the most confounded man in Europe must be General Franco in Spain. For almost three years, with German and Italian help, he fought a bitter civil war against what he considered to be a communist-inspired regime. But now his allies, Hitler and Mussolini, have in effect lined up—at least for the present—with the communists.

Another thing about this crisis is that it is a terribly *expensive* crisis. One could write a nice essay on "The High Cost of Hitler." This crisis has been unbelievably disorganizing. The juggernaut of mobilization has begun. Families are being broken up. Thousands upon thousands of hearts are aching, millions upon millions of dollars are being spent. This crisis costs overwhelmingly, in cash, in spirit. One has a sense of the disintegration of Europe. The Continent resembles some gigantic sealed train, a railway train, with 350,000,000 people in it, plunging recklessly towards some destination—no one knows what. The window shades are drawn. The doors are locked. No one can see outside.



Or even inside No one can talk to the driver  
No one knows who the driver is

Another thing is that people are beginning to be *fed up* with this situation, with this crisis. Anyone who has lived this last week in Eastern Europe, as I have, must realize how they resent this continued torture to them. People *are* fed up with it. It costs them. And this has stiffened the British particularly. I believe German stories to the effect that the Poles are so fed up that they, not the Czechs, may start the war. But I do believe that the allied powers have made up their minds that this sort of thing has got to stop. They want peace. Everyone wants peace. But they will not tolerate the high cost of Mr. Hitler very much longer.

I've talked rather more than I intended about these general aspects of the crisis. I've been asked to say something to-night about the Soviet Union, and the recent bizarre developments there. Let me begin.

Moscow is still one of the most interesting cities in the world. It's full of strangeness, of unexpected contrasts, of vitality. It's changed a good deal since my last visit four years ago. There's a big new coffee house, opposite Lenin's tomb. People dress better—a little bit better—and there's been a good deal of public building. The

streets are full of automobiles, noisy automobiles. There are more things to buy, but most consumer's goods are still very scarce, especially clothing, and prices are fantastic. Some highly exciting novelties have appeared in the Soviet shops—egg beaters for instance, cheese graters, roller skates, bananas. Not so many people stand in line. I saw only three lines. One was for taxis, one for sausage (at about \$2 per pound), one for undershirts. As to prices, they are unbelievable. You can sell an old suit of clothes for a thousand roubles, \$200 at the official rate of exchange. An automobile tyre may cost \$200. A good pair of shoes costs a month's average wages.

The thing that struck me most was that Moscow is the place where the last phase of this crisis was born—at least the Russo-German pact was signed there—but Moscow shows less sign of strain, less evidence of military preparation, than any major capital I've visited. The Russians are sitting pretty. They're too big to be invaded, and they have just bought off their major enemy. I saw no gas-masks in Moscow, no air-raid shelters. The Russo German pact may provoke Hitler to a war. But in Moscow scarcely a soldier is to be seen on the streets.

I did notice two things, though. In Moscow searchlights—with their long silver fingers—cross the sky all night. And the Kremlin is floodlit.

these days. The searchlights play behind the illuminated Kremlin. Far cry from the dark streets of most of western Europe! Another small detail is that some of the Moscow boulevards have been so enormously cleared and widened that aeroplanes could, if necessary, land on them, right in the middle of the city.

Let me go on to the events of this week. The Russians, as you all know, were negotiating with France and Britain to join the so-called peace front. British and French military missions were in Moscow. The talks were proceeding slowly. But—we didn't know this then—they struck a snag. It appeared that the British and French had to tell the Russians that Poland would not allow Russian troops actually to enter Polish territory—as allies of course—in the event of war. Then we heard, last Sunday night, that Russia and Germany had signed an important commercial treaty. This was followed Monday by the announcement of the impending political treaty, and then by Ribbentrop's trip to Moscow. The treaty was signed within twenty-four hours. I've seldom seen people so stupefied as the French and British were. They tried to laugh it off at first. They said, "This is confounded cheek." The event was too bewildering to believe—that Stalin had joined forces with his greatest enemy, Hitler—that Stalin had suddenly jumped to the enemy's

side, right under the nose of the French and British delegations. Late that afternoon the French and British gave up trying to laugh it off. They looked like ghosts.

Now, why did the Russians make this astounding turnabout? Why did they risk plunging Europe into war, by giving Mr. Hitler this nice green light?

Traditionally Soviet foreign policy has veered between two alternatives. First, isolation. Second, co-operation with the rest of Europe. It's easy to see why isolation was tempting to the Kremlin. Its attitude is strikingly like that of isolationists in the United States. Why, the Russians asked themselves, should they pull Mr. Chamberlain's chestnuts out of the fire? If western Europe is so stupid and reckless as to chew itself to pieces every twenty years, very well, let it chew. Then the Soviet Union might come in and pick up any pieces left. On the other hand, there was a contrary impulse in the Russian mind—to collaborate with western Europe, to join Britain and France in joint defence against Germany, in order to check the danger of war and the spread of Fascism. Germany was considered the No. 1 ideological enemy and the No. 1 political enemy also.

But now the Russians have calmly deserted both these former possibilities. They have signed

up *with* Hitler. It makes a bitter pill for many liberals to swallow. Why? *Why?*

First, the Soviet Union—professedly at least—has always wanted, above everything, peace *for itself*. It wanted to remove danger of attack from Germany. It wanted security—good relations—with Germany, if it could get them on satisfactory terms. After all, Russia and Germany signed one pact way back in 1926. In those days the Red Army and the Reichwehr were very close.

Second, the Russians saw this pact as a wonderful manœuvre against their enemy in the east, Japan. It gives Russia practically a free hand against Japan, if trouble in the east should come. Hereafter the Russians don't have to watch both frontiers. This, incidentally, should serve very strongly to improve Japanese relations with the United States.

Third, by signing up with the Germans, the Russians have blown the old Anti-Comintern pact sky high. This Anti-Comintern pact annoyed them, and was a focus of what—last week—we would have called Fascist designs against the U.S.S.R. Now it loses all meaning and importance. In fact, I heard one friend in Moscow say—with some bitterness perhaps—that Stalin has now joined the Anti-Comintern pact himself. Certainly the Russian position is peculiar to say

the least For many years, the Russians have exhibited themselves as the chief bulwark in Europe against Fascism Now, in effect, they join the Fascists It's almost laughable

Fourth, the Russians profoundly distrusted the British and the French They didn't believe the British were sincere They were extremely dissatisfied with the dawdling nature of the military talks They were asked to help Poland—without being allowed to help Poland! They thought also that there might be another Munich over Poland—another sell out—and they didn't want to be caught holding the bag

Now why did Germany, on its side, join Russia? Hitler must have known that the new pact would alienate the Japanese, offend Hungary and Spain, and give his own people something really extraordinary to digest As to the Japanese, I was told on good authority in Stockholm that Hitler, for months, had been trying to get the Japanese to join the Berlin axis, as a military partner, but they refused, and so Hitler determined to cut out Japan there is a story that he was worried that it might be called lack of enthusiasm for a war, and so decided to get another ally One thing seems almost certain The pact came like a thunder-bolt, but it seems that negotiations between Germany and Russia have been going on for some time I have heard it

said that the pact has been on ice ready to sign since June.

Above all, of course, Hitler wanted the pact because it means that Poland is now isolated, caught between two fires. The British and French are at a ghastly disadvantage in defending Poland. They cannot get troops into Poland, or even supplies, except with the greatest difficulty.

So much, then, for the more unpleasant aspects of this Russo-German pact. But there is a possibility—just a possibility—that, incredible as it may seem, the Russian manoeuvre *may* lead to a European settlement, that is may lead not to war but to peace. This is what the Russians themselves say—very pointedly. It was the only explanation, if it is an explanation, that I got when I talked with officials in the Soviet Foreign office the other day.

The Russian theory seems to be this. The Russians believe that, as a result of the pact, Hitler will be able to force some settlement of the Danzig question *without* war. They say that Poland, caught between two fires, deprived of the possibility of help from the Soviet Union, must realize that it cannot fight, and hence must make *some* sort of concession. Moreover, the Russians assumed that the British would realize that Poland could not be defended, and would therefore lend their support to some kind of compromise. The

Russians are making a terribly risky gamble on the chance that war will *not* come, as a direct result of this new balance of power

Another thing The Russians have one more idea Perhaps they're wrong I don't know They say that their commercial agreement with Germany, the commercial agreement that preceded the political pact, may also turn out to be a powerful instrument towards a European settlement, if war can only be avoided *for a time* The Russians think that Hitler must, as it were, unwind He must transform his wartime economy to a *peace-time economy* He can only do this by a great increase in his export trade, which the new economic agreement with Russia provides The Russians say that they can help Hitler to relax, to unwind

If the Poles do fight—and it is absolutely certain that the British will fight with the Poles—it is not Danzig that they are fighting for The Danzig question has very little to do with Danzig What they will be fighting for is the independence of the Polish nation Nor are the British and French fighting for Danzig They are fighting for the retention of their power in Europe and their colonial empires If Poland is lost, Great Britain and France may be lost, because Poland is vital to their equilibrium *vis-a-vis* Germany What is going on is a struggle for permanent power and



security. The Germans announce that Danzig alone will not satisfy them; they want all their former territory in eastern Europe. This would mean the destruction of the Poland we know now. Poland would die as Czechoslovakia died. And Germany would be undisputed master of the continent of Europe.

VI

CRISIS

*London, August 28, 1939.*

GOOD evening, everybody. We're not standing by for air-raids yet—at least not this minute—but if they do come, we'll certainly need a good sense of ear. We practically have to be musicians. Walking down Oxford Street this afternoon I saw one of the new air-raid posters. Maybe it's old stuff to you, but it was new to me. Let me quote it briefly:

“Warnings of impending air-raid alarms will be given by a fluctuating or warbling signal of varying pitch, or by a succession of hooters or sirens. These signals may be supplemented by sharp blasts and police whistles. The ‘Raiders passed’ signal is a continuous whistle at a steady pitch. If poison gas has been used, the warning will be given by hand rattles. The ringing of hand bells, finally, will announce that danger from gas has passed.”

The British are magnificently prepared, down to the last musical detail. There's no doubt about that.

A few doors from this first poster I saw a second poster. It announced where mothers may procure gas-masks for children—infants under

two years old What a shocking commentary this is on our so-called civilization! The most shocking thing about it is that no one seems to find it shocking Everyone has become numbed to horror

Everywhere I went in Europe this summer, I heard that Britain was the most nervous country, the most agitated country, in Europe I've been here scarcely twenty-four hours, and perhaps I have no right to an opinion, but I've seen a good many people, of all sorts and classes, in these twenty-four hours, and my impression is that this statement—that the British are panicky—is quite untrue, quite unfounded Of course the British feel some sensible apprehension Every prudent person must feel that But there is no agitation—no loss of nerve—no real alarm London is almost disconcertingly calm

In fact, so far as I can see, there's very little change in the normal routine of life, except that shops and stores and hotels are rather empty. One sees a few trenches in the parks, a few big silver balloons ready to rise, a few sand-bags in important buildings Aeroplanes fly low—over the city—all night The people are ready for trouble if trouble comes But they're not getting unduly excited about it They're confident, they're united, and they're fixed in their determination to fight, if fighting becomes necessary

No one wants war No one can possibly want war But no one is going to dodge it if it comes

So far as I know—unless something has happened in the last few minutes—there's been no appreciable change in the general international situation since yesterday, except that its tempo has intensified Nor do I think there is going to be any big, drastic, overwhelming, change for another few hours This is the general opinion The reason is that Hitler will not, most people think, care to strike until he makes up his mind in regard to the message the British Ambassador to Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, has brought from London Henderson flew back to Berlin to-night and is talking to Hitler now We shall know better where we stand to-morrow afternoon, when the British parliament meets This summons of parliament can, I imagine, mean only one thing Chamberlain will tell the Commons what Hitler's terms are, and will announce the British reply

There's not much hope for peace to-night—only the most shadowy glimmer—but, still, a miracle may happen

Last night I mentioned my recent circumnavigation of Germany, my private encirclement of Mr Hitler To-night I'd like to discuss the military and political position of the countries surrounding Germany, as many as I have time for

First as to Holland and Belgium They will make every effort to remain neutral, as will Switzerland and the Scandinavian states The position of Belgium is peculiar In 1914 of course it was invaded by Germany, and it fought with the Allies Now Germany has hastened to guarantee that Belgium will not be attacked, and the French and British have followed suit Belgium is guaranteed by Britain, France, *and* Germany, which gives it an unique position If Belgium remains neutral, with its small but powerful army, the strategic position of the Allies is considerably weakened This is because the neutrality of Belgium shortens the western front by half—it means that Germany is in a much better position to concentrate and consolidate its defence in a very limited area Holland, on the contrary, has no guarantees Nor has Switzerland They do not want guarantees They want to be let alone

We come now to Italy. The position of Italy is of the most vital, the most critical importance I'm convinced that the Italian people don't want to fight I'm convinced absolutely that Mussolini doesn't want to fight But his problem is how to get peace, without overtly breaking the Rome-Berlin Axis, and thus provoking the terrible wrath of Mr Hitler The Rome-Berlin Axis is far from popular in Italy You know the little

joke: Things were better in Italy—under Mussolini. Some of the powerful old-time Fascist chieftains bitterly dislike the pro-German policy of Count Ciano. On the other hand, almost all Italians feel that they have a justifiable grudge against France. Italian feeling is not so much against Britain as against France.

This afternoon the Italian Government sent a message of sympathy to Tokyo. This may be an indirect manner of indicating to Hitler its disapproval of the new Russo-German pact, which has upset all our apple-carts.

Six weeks or so ago, you remember, the German-speaking people of the Italian Tyrol, some 200,000 of them, were expelled from their homes, though their families had lived there for hundreds of years. This was done on Mussolini's initiative, not Hitler's. Hitler didn't like it. But Mussolini was getting compensation for having remained quiet when Hitler took Austria. Mussolini was taking Hitler at his word that the Brenner frontier should be eternal, and he did not intend to have any German-speaking people, a future source of irredentism perhaps, on his side of the border. Then, a few weeks later, *all* foreigners, even Swiss and British, were expelled from the Tyrol. This, I was told, in Italy, was a sop to Hitler. Hitler asked Mussolini to expel these others, so that he could explain to the German people that

there was no discrimination purely against Germans

Just a word, now, on Hungary Here, too, the position is highly delicate—almost in the balance When I went to Budapest, I thought that Hungary was not much more than a Nazi sub-state, a German dependency But after a day or so I changed my mind The Hungarians are in no position to defy the Germans They are in the position of a mouse at the feet of an elephant They can only squeak But the mouse does not like the elephant. And the Hungarians do not like the Germans If I heard it once in Budapest I heard it twenty times this Hungarian Government will never wage war with Germany against Poland. The Hungarians and Poles have a common frontier now, and they are very close, emotionally, politically. The present Hungarian Government will do everything in its power to refrain from injuring or attacking Poland, if war comes

On the other side are two contrary factors One is that this present Hungarian Government is not as strong a government as it might be. And there are powerful Nazi influences at work, under the surface, in the police, the bureaucracy, and among the politicians There are half a dozen disguised or overt Nazi parties. The situation is rather like that of Austria in the



Dollfuss dyes, when the Germans prepared the *Anschluss* by tactics of infiltration. Second, the Hungarians have a bitter and ancient quarrel with Rumania. They want their Transylvanian territory back. And Germany might promise to give it back—in time—as reward for Hungarian assistance against Poland.

Count Czaky, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, suddenly flew to Rome the other day, after having seen Herr von Ribbentrop. The story we have here is that Ribbentrop demanded Hungarian assistance in the event of war. And Czaky, who is very pro-Italian, rushed to Mussolini to ask if there was any way out. Incidentally, the Hungarians have been upset by the Russo-German pact almost as much as the Japanese and Spaniards.

As to the Baltic States—Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania—all four desperately hope to remain neutral. In Riga I found some suspicion that Germany and Russia may some day think in terms of complementary spheres of influence in the Baltic region. Finland and Esthonia to enter the Russian sphere, Latvia and Lithuania to enter the German sphere. Naturally, all four hope to resist this process.

So we have this picture. If war comes, at the beginning at least, Belgium is expected to remain neutral, Holland and Switzerland neutral, the

three Scandinavian states neutral, the four Baltic states neutral, Spain neutral Hungary, neutral if it can possibly stay out Russia—neutral—but probably helping Germany with raw materials, and *not* helping Poland Yugoslavia, neutral at the beginning What will eventually happen in Yugoslavia will depend on what Italy does This leaves England, France, Poland, Rumania, Turkey, and probably Greece on one side, against Germany and possibly Italy on the other

If war comes, the German plan of course is to throw the whole immense weight of its war machine against Poland They have neutralized Russia—the dream of their policy—and they think they can hold the west in check So they hope to finish Poland off almost at once I've talked to several military experts about their chances of doing this Estimates differ widely The Germans say that they can conquer Poland in three weeks Very few people think that the Poles—alone—can hold out more than a year But it will be no joy ride for the Germans, no promenade The Poles will be fighting for their homeland, for their existence as a nation They're biologically strong They can call up 6,000,000 men They *will* fight

One disconcerting thing is this, it is one of the things that make Poland so hard to defend The British will attempt to blockade Germany But

in order to blockade Germany, their enemy, they have to blockade Poland, their ally, too. Geography plays strange tricks in eastern Europe.

The Poles intend to rely, partly, on something peculiar—their own *bad* roads. They have deliberately kept their roads, especially those towards the German frontier, in an impossible state of *repair, so as to impede invasion by German mechanized forces.*

I've heard very well informed people say that the Germans may make no move in the west at all, at least at first. I wouldn't dare myself to risk a prophecy on this. I think one must take into account Hitler's frightful rage against England. But my friends say that, if war comes, the Germans may very well sit tight behind their Siegfried line, and dare the British and French to take the offensive. To take the offensive will not be easy. It is not amusing to smash your way through steel and concrete fortifications. It may even happen that we are *not* going to get the plastering here—from the air—that almost everyone expects. The Germans may wait for the British and French to take the onus of first bombing open towns.

A final word on Italy. It may be smart tactics by Germany to see that Italy, her ally, does remain neutral. First, if this happened, Germany could presumably import raw materials from

Italy, at least for a time. Second, it would put France in the uncomfortable position of having to attack a neutral state. For the French might seek to break the deadlock in the west by attacking Germany indirectly, through Italy. It makes a ghastly paradox—in order to beat Germany, France might have to bring Italy into the war on the enemy's side.

## VII

### ENGLAND ALERT

*London, August 29, 1939.*

GOOD evening, everybody. It's three o'clock in the morning—over here—and nothing's happened yet. We're still on the edge of the precipice, a steep and very unpleasant precipice. We're still in suspense, in suspended animation one might say.

The basic situation remains about the same, I think. It is this. Herr Hitler presented his terms to the British Government. The British Government, after four Cabinet meetings—after exhaustive examination—gave Hitler its reply. And now Hitler has replied to the British reply. So far, we've had three different notes.

Now, there's just a trace of optimism to-night. Not much. It's still a desperately dangerous situation. But to-night, both here and in Berlin, one senses a *slight* lifting of tension. This is because it has become quite obvious—ever since Mr. Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons this afternoon—that Hitler has, as it were, been caught in his own squeeze play, and is looking for a way out.

All of Hitler's hopes, I think, were based on the idea either of Polish submission without war, or of a short single-handed war with Poland,

which he expected to win easily. For months, for months, he refused to believe that Britain would fight. He must know now that Britain *will* fight. And he does not want to fight Britain, he does not want to fight Britain and France and Poland all together.

So, as we see it here, Hitler is confronted with a desperate alternative. He dislikes intensely having to proceed to what will certainly be a general war, once it starts. The instant Poland is invaded, on that instant Britain and France will come to Polish support. But it is extremely difficult for Hitler to back down, since he has now formally announced to the German people that Danzig—and the Corridor too—will be theirs.

As to the British, Mr Chamberlain seemed guardedly to hint to day that, if the German-Polish question could be straightened out, there might be some wider agreement possible. This is a pretty clear lead to Hitler to look forward to some general kind of international conference, if he manages to withdraw from the Polish *impasse* without warfare. But here again a difficulty arises. The British cannot possibly offer anything to Hitler unless he offers something first. They cannot appease Hitler at the expense of Poland. Things have gone a long way beyond that type of appeasement. The British won't budge an inch, unless Hitler budges first.

It all boils down to this, I think. Hitler wanted a short easy war. But the British promise him a long difficult war.

The thing that impressed me most in the House to-day was Mr. Chamberlain's complete calmness. He spoke with full attention to the seriousness of the situation, but almost as if he were presiding at a rather dull bank meeting. The most interesting thing that he said, I thought, was his apparently casual remark that *this* country would not begin the war, if it came, with ration cards. The house whooped at this—if whoop is a proper word to use.

*London, August 30, 1939.*

Let me begin by mentioning again something I pointed out a few evenings ago. That is, the expense and the exasperating dislocation caused by this crisis—its cost in money and energy—the extreme interruption it has brought to every field of activity. I want also to point out that the chief result of this dislocation is what I can only describe as fed-upness, determination that this crisis shall not recur again. If the crisis is settled, if some solution is found, the British people are not going to go through the same sort of thing any more. If there is a solution, it's going to be a permanent solution, if the public opinion of this



country has its way Now this attitude, this feeling—which is universal here—is very important It serves to stiffen the British people They want a settlement They don't want war But they don't want a patchwork settlement They don't want any settlement that may produce another crisis like this one next year They are fed up with this sort of crisis It's going to be the last one They will not accept a solution that simply postpones the evil day. They'd much rather fight right now

I can't tell you how life in London has been upset and disorganized by this vicious crisis Early to-day I passed the redcoats at Buckingham Palace Next to the sentry boxes are metal containers—to hold the sentry in case of raids The containers are tall round things, they have to be tall, the sentries are tall At noon I watched the parks being dug up Not for trenches But to get gravel for the hundreds of millions of sandbags that are on order I picked up a newspaper I saw that school children will probably have to attend school this Saturday and Sunday, normally holidays of course, so that a sudden evacuation may be properly organized Later in the afternoon I went to my favourite bookshop The proprietor, a splendid Scotsman, was doing his utmost to defend his staff At his own expense he had shored up the basement with huge timbers,

he had built improved passageways and protected corridors, he had buttressed his windows, not with sand bags, but, believe it or not, with hundreds of copies—nice and solid in brown packages—of *Gone with the Wind*. In every corner, neat and ready, were buckets of sand, fire extinguishers, axes. 'This, mind you—axes—in one of the most quietly exclusive and refined shops in the world—axes! And it's typical of thousands of establishments in this city

I haven't asked people much about immediate politics to-day. I've asked instead how they felt about this crisis in comparison to the Munich crisis last September. Everyone agrees that this crisis is infinitely more dangerous, more severe. Also they say this Munich came as a surprise. People weren't fully educated in the habits, shall I say, of Mr. Hitler. They wanted peace above all, and they were willing to pay for peace. The attitude is absolutely different to-day. The people don't want war. But they are not going to submit blindly to Hitler's new demands. They will not tolerate that Great Britain do any budging. This, they say, is the real show-down. If it's war, we're ready. And they say "We're not going to go through this kind of crisis again. We're going to finish with this sort of crisis for good and all."

History is a continuous process. It never stops

It is interesting to reflect that both Germany and Britain are in a sense paying now for their behaviour in the past six months, the past year Hitler is paying for it, because, when he took Czechoslovakia in March, in flat repudiation of his word, he alienated any possible British sympathy or support for his present position. The British Government, in turn, is paying for these past six months, this past year, because it had such a shockingly bad record in foreign policy. Because it was weak before, it must be strong now. It can't give Hitler *anything*, because previously it gave him too much. This is a central issue in the whole crisis.

The major situation remains unchanged. There's another note, a second British note answering the second German note. The immense tension continues. It's a battle of will and nerves between Chamberlain and Hitler. The British may be deliberately stringing out this period of tension as long as possible, first because they do hope for peace, second because they are perfectly sure that they can stand the strain longer than the Germans.

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*London, August 31, 1939*

We know better where we stand to night. After these eight days of crisis, of stalemate, of

deadlock, of fumbling in the dark, we know—at last—just what the Germans want, or at least what they say they want. The German official radio issued to-night a list of sixteen points, which embody the German demands to Poland.

I've just come from a news-ticker in a big West End hotel. People stood six deep around it. There was more curiosity and excitement than I've seen in London since the crisis started.

The Germans demand the unconditional return of Danzig; they propose elaborate plans for a plebiscite, to be held next year, in regard to the Corridor; they propose a provisional arrangement, meantime, whereby they have rights of transit in the Corridor. There is a great deal else. The Germans say that they presented these proposals two days ago, and have had no reply; that therefore they regard the proposals as virtually rejected.

The Poles, I understand, are perfectly willing to begin direct negotiations with Germany. The British are perfectly willing that they should do so. But the Poles are not willing to negotiate under threat of force, and they are not willing to negotiate if negotiation means the partition, the dismemberment, of their country.

The basic issue is tremendously clarified to-night, but—I hate to keep on saying this—it hasn't changed much. The issue remains per-

## VIII

### WHITE PAPER AND BLACK LONDON

*London, September 1, 1939.*

GOOD evening, everybody. A few hours ago we got the text of the White Paper, that is the correspondence between the British and German Governments during these last critical days. I'd like to discuss and try to analyse this White Paper. It's an exceedingly complicated series of diplomatic documents, not easy to digest on a moment's notice. It's as fascinating as a detective story.

The gist of it—the main overwhelming gist—is that Germany could have had peace, *paix* with honour, and chose not to have it.

The White Paper consists of fourteen separate documents. First is the British communication to the German Government on August 22. In this the British state once more, unequivocally, their determination to stand by Poland in the event that Poland finds it necessary to fight for her independence. It proposes direct negotiations between Poland and Germany, on the theory that the differences between the two countries can still be resolved without use of force. It suggests a truce. It suggests also that, if a settlement is reached, it be guaranteed by the other Powers.

This first British note contains one sentence of particularly pregnant interest. It is a polite—but pointed—hint to Hitler that, if war comes, it will be a long war. “It would be a dangerous illusion to think,” writes Mr Chamberlain, “that, if war once starts, it will come to an early end, even if a success on any one of the several fronts on which it will be engaged should have been secured.”

On August 23, the next day, came Hitler's reply. This is Document No 2. It is an angry document, truculent, overbearing, and written in Mr Hitler's usual muddy prose. It says that Germany has always wanted British friendship. It says that, out of feeling for Britain, Germany has voluntarily limited her own interests in a wide area of Europe—where, otherwise, she might presumably have been developing. It goes on to say, however, that Germany has some interests—national, political, psychological, which it is impossible to renounce. There's one rather naughty sentence. Herr Hitler says, with high sarcasm, “Those lands which returned to the Reich eighteen months ago”—meaning presumably Austria—“received their cultural development at the hands not of the English but exclusively of the Germans, and this moreover from a time dating back over a thousand years.” As if the English ever disputed that Austria, culturally,

This first British note contains no difference of particularly pregnant interest how bloody and—but pointed—hint to Hitler between Germany and it will be a long war “Interestingly—“In conclusion to think,” Germany would no longer “that, if war once fronts” What does Hitler end, even if a situation he expects—he really expects fronts on which Poland completely before the been secured? He proceeds to mention Russia.

On August 11 Hitler's correspondence with Russia is replied in the warmest terms. Russia and Germany, he says, will never again take up arms against each other. In one place, he demands that Russia shall be a guarantor of the new frontiers of Poland. Hitler then proceeds to a truly astounding suggestion. How I look forward, to-morrow, when it is published here, to seeing what the British editorial writers make of it. Hitler offers to guarantee the continued existence of the British Empire! The exact text is, “Herr Hitler accepts the British Empire and is ready to pledge himself personally for its continued existence, and to place the power of the German Reich at its disposal”—on certain conditions. These conditions are, mainly, some “limited” colonial demands. If the Polish question is settled, he says, he will approach the British Government with a general offer. Then comes an odd remark: “He—the Fuhrer—is a man of great decisions



and in this case also he will be capable of being great in his action."

Document No. 4 is the British reply of August 28. It is reasoned and temperate. It accepts, without full commitment, the German offer in regard to future relations with Great Britain. But it reiterates that a settlement of German-Polish differences must come first. It says that everything will turn on the nature of this settlement, and the method by which it is to be reached. It suggests, then, direct discussions between the German and Polish Governments. It adds that the Poles are willing that such discussions should begin.

Document No. 5 is the German reply dated August 28, but only given to Sir Neville Henderson on August 29. This is the most important document of all.

It starts out by speaking again of "barbaric acts of maltreatment"—by Poland against Germany—"which cry to heaven." Hitler's tone gets more violent. He categorically demands the return of Danzig and the Corridor to Germany, the first time in the correspondence that he does so. He says that only hours remain in which to find a settlement. He refuses to accept the view of the British Government that direct negotiations with Poland will be of any use. Nevertheless, because he wants to keep Britain's friendship,

he agrees to negotiate directly with Poland, provided a Polish emissary arrives in Berlin within something less than twenty-four hours. The German Government, he says, will immediately draw up proposals for a solution acceptable *to itself* which it will present to this emissary. The whole issue resides in this sentence, which is in effect an ultimatum. And the Germans seem to indicate that, in fact, no negotiations will take place when this negotiator arrives, since it is apparently established that *only* terms agreeable to Germany, and previously fixed by Germany alone, will be considered. In other words, the Poles are asked simply to send someone to Berlin—as Schuschnigg went to Berchtesgaden, as Hacha went to Berlin—to hear their own death sentence. They are invited to Berlin for one purpose only—to hear the terms they must submit to—to cut their own throats.

Then, in the White Paper, comes a long series of telegrams, mostly from the British Government to Sir Nevile Henderson for transmission to the German Government. The British say that they will carefully consider the German note, but that it is unreasonable to ask that a Polish emissary should arrive so quickly in Berlin. They plead for a truce on the frontier. They get assurance that Poland will commit no act of provocation.

Document No 10 is the British Note of August 30. It proposes a temporary *modus vivendi* for Danzig, and goes a long way towards meeting the German claims. It suggests that, during the negotiations—which the British apparently think *may* take place—both sides promise to make no aggressive military action. The British add that they are sure that they can get this promise from the Poles.

Then comes the climax. This British note of August 30 was presented by Henderson to Ribbentrop on midnight of the 30th. Ribbentrop's answer was verbal. At a rapid pace he read aloud a long memorandum, the sixteen points that were later announced on the German radio. Henderson asked for the text. Ribbentrop said that it was too late, since the Polish plenipotentiary had not arrived by midnight. He refused to give the British Ambassador the text.

We know what happened yesterday, the 31st. All day long, from eight in the morning, the Polish Ambassador to Berlin, Mr Lipsky, asked to be received. He was asked "Do you come as an ambassador or as a plenipotentiary?" He said that he came as an ambassador. He was not received till 8 p.m. He was then presented with the Sixteen German Points. Lipsky tried at once to get into communication with his government. But Germany had cut all the lines to Warsaw.

Then at 9 p.m. the Germans announced the points on the radio.

Later the Germans said that these points—their final demands, the bases on which negotiation was presumably to occur, has been rejected. But in fact the British never saw them, and the Poles were given absolutely no chance to consider them. At dawn the following morning—this morning—the German attack began. War began.

*London, September 1, 1939.*

It's a strange face that London wears to-night. It's a dark face. We're having a black-out here. The streets are black, the houses are black. It began to rain this afternoon, and the streets emptied quickly, as darkness fell; in the length of Piccadilly there were only half a dozen cars. Some workmen were still busy, carrying sand-bags into position. The whole town looks sand-bagged. And it's as black as the blackest ink.

War began to-day. You all know that. What may be the second world war began to-day. You all know that too. But London is quiet, quiet and confident. The British take even such a supreme moment of crisis as to-night with good humour, calmly. A few moments ago I saw something highly typical on the news ticker: "The Football

Association announces that a message received stated that the situation at present does not warrant the cancellation of to-morrow's matches."

An hour ago I talked to you about the White Paper, that extraordinary document. I'd like now to say a word about to-day's meeting of the House of Commons. It was tense and moving. I've never heard the House burst into such a torrential roar, half of anger at Hitler, half of praise of the British point of view, as when the Prime Minister said: "We shall stand before the bar of History knowing that responsibility for this terrible catastrophe stands on the shoulders of one man—the German Chancellor."

The House was with Chamberlain a hundred per cent when he expressed British determination to stand by Poland. There was some disappointment in the lobbies later when it became known that the message transmitted to Ribbentrop to-night does not contain a time limit. The British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, is simply instructed to demand his passport—equivalent to a rupture of relations—if the German Government refuses to withdraw its troops from Poland. But no time limit is given. Some people think that, conceivably, the Germans may seek to delay British entrance into the war, by holding off any answer at all. But the Anglo-Polish Pact, Article One, says that Britain

must come to the aid of Poland, if Poland is invaded, *at once*.

Chamberlain said, with great emotion, his voice almost breaking, "How easily a final clash might have been avoided if there had been the least desire on the part of the German Government to arrive at a peaceful settlement."

The other chief item in Mr. Chamberlain's speech had to do with the position of Italy. He said that Signor Mussolini had also been working for peace these days. Italy has announced that it will take no military initiative. And late tonight comes a similar announcement from another German partner, from Japan.

A Japanese newspaper announces, "By the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, Japan has been exempted from its obligation supporting Germany. Thus Japan has been freed from an extraordinary danger."

It seems that Mr. Hitler is going to have to fight this war without the encumbrance of too many allies.

## IX

### THE LAST DAY

curious report, from France, indicating indecision somewhere. A Polish friend, sitting next to me, listened as if stunned.

We went up to watch the house. Mr. Chamberlain's statement was promised for six. The members were restless. They had been pushing legislation through very fast. The Sergeant at Arms was continually coming in and out, to adjust the position of the mace. The House laughed a great deal, as members came in and bowed to the Speaker. They sang out, One, Two, Three, Four, as ministers marched to the bar of the House and bowed—in time to their steps. Obviously nervous tension was extreme. At 6.10 the attendants pulled the black shades over the windows, and the lights were dimmed. But the ceiling windows—these strange square coloured windows in the roof—were left unshaded. On the floors, giving a dim glow, squat emergency lamps were lit.

We went in, went out again. First it was said that the Prime Minister would speak at 7, then at 7.30. The other ministers began to gather. Sir John Simon crossed the floor, and sat for a moment with the labour members. Mr. Churchill came in, with grimness on his face. Lady Astor moved up to the Government bench for a moment and squeezed in next to Mr. Hore-Belisha. There was an expectant hush. Then at 7.40 Mr. Chamberlain came in.



There was a big cheer for Mr. Chamberlain at first. He rose at once, ground his hands together, and spoke in a full voice. He said that Sir Nevile Henderson had delivered the British ultimatum to Herr von Ribbentrop at 9.30 last night. Ribbentrop then said that he must consult Hitler before giving a reply. "Up to the present," Mr. Chamberlain said, "we have received no reply."

The House almost audibly drew in breath. Mr. Chamberlain paused ever so slightly. This situation was envisaged by some of us last night. Apparently the British ultimatum contained no time limit. Hitler was in a position to stall. He could either refuse to give an immediate reply, or say that he would reply at some future date.

Mr. Chamberlain went on in a rather different tone of voice. It was obvious that the House was deeply shocked. He said that the delay was possibly caused by an Italian proposal for mediation, an Italian proposal that hostilities should stop, and that the great Powers should attempt to open negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

The Prime Minister then said that the British Government would find it impossible to take part in any conference while Poland was still subjected to an invasion. There were big cheers at this. He then added that the British Government was

bound to take action unless the German forces were withdrawn. At this point the House, bewildered and indignant, could restrain itself no longer. There were loud cries of "When? When?"

Mr. Chamberlain gave a hint—just a hint—about the possibility of appeasement. He indicated that if the Germans should withdraw their forces and establish something like the *status quo ante*—though these were not his exact words, which were difficult to follow—negotiations might be still possible. He proceeded to say that the British Government did not recognize the legality of the German incorporation of Danzig into the Reich.

When the Prime Minister sat down something like pandemonium came to the House. There were shouts, boos, catcalls, cheers, cries of order. "Speak for England" someone called out invitingly to Mr. Greenwood, the Leader of the Opposition, as he rose to speak. Greenwood couldn't talk for a moment. There was angry calling back and forth. Then Greenwood said that this was indeed a grave moment. The whole House was perturbed. He pointed out that the German invasion of Poland had begun thirty-eight hours ago. He pointed out—with passion—that the British Government was pledged to come to the assistance of Poland immediately. Why,

he asked, had the British pledge not been put into effect?

Someone shouted across the House—"You people don't intend to march. Not a blank one of you will march." Pandemonium again.

Proceeding Mr. Greenwood said frankly that the British must, of course, wait upon their allies, but he asked how long the vacillation would continue. He implored the Prime Minister to end this appalling tension, to say clearly one way or the other, whether it was peace or war. To-morrow the Prime Minister must make a final statement, he said. He asserted that further delay meant imperilling the National Interest. Cries came, "Our honour!" from all sides of the House.

Then Mr. Greenwood, practically bursting with the terrible words, and giving expression to what was in everybody's mind, shouted out, "No more devices for ratting!"

Mr. Chamberlain got up again. He had no notes this time. He looked worn out. He grasped the big dispatch box on the table. He admitted that the Government found itself in a somewhat difficult position. He denied that the delay meant any weakening (this brought cheers) but again he talked about British contact with France and pointed out how difficult it was to synchronize things by telephone. It wasn't like speaking in the same room, he said. He said that he would

through the House, reverberating, like some bizarre accompaniment to the Prime Minister's speech

Mr Chamberlain said the following, as the House, hushed, hung on every word, hung on every word as if it were a stanchion "We were in close consultation with the French Government and we felt that the intensified action which the Germans were making in Poland allowed of no delay in making our position clear Accordingly we decided to send our Ambassador in Berlin instructions which he handed at 9 a m to-day to Herr von Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister Unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action, and would withdraw its troops, His Majesty's Government would fulfil without hesitation its obligations to Poland

"This communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago No reply has been received I have the honour accordingly to inform you that unless, not later than 11 a m, British summer time to-day, September 3, satisfactory assurances have been given by the German Government, and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist as between the two countries from that hour" Chamberlain went on "No such undertaking

was received by the time stipulated, and consequently this country is now at war with Germany."

The Prime Minister's last words were these: "Everything that I worked for, everything that I hoped for, everything that I believed in through my public life, has crashed in ruins. There is but one thing left for me, and that is I hope with what strength and power I have to forward the cause for which we have all sacrificed so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself. I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed, and so restore the liberty of Europe."

And then came the cheers—moving cheers, not loud, deeply felt, *sad* cheers.

Two more speeches followed. Each had extraordinary dramatic quality. Not so much from what the speakers said. But from the point of view of what they represented in the continuing stream of British history. The speakers I mean were, of course, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill. Both sat in this same House that day twenty-five years ago—twenty-five years and one month to a day—when Britain also declared war on Germany. Both Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill were members of the Cabinet which won that war. A great many minds, in the House and elsewhere, must have

turned back to that day just a quarter-century ago. They must have thought of all the waste, all the tragedy, all the inhuman suffering. They must have remembered that Sir Edward Grey said, the night Britain declared war on Germany twenty-five years ago, "The lights of Europe are fading fast, the lights of Europe are going out."

Mr. Churchill, a great master of oratory, of good sound English prose, said, "In our hearts, this Sunday morning, there is peace. Our hands may be active; our consciences are at rest." This is a war, he declared, to lift up the stature of man. Mr. Lloyd George rose. He talked in a very low voice. "Speak up, speak up," the House called. He said simply that he had been through all this before. He mentioned some of the bad moments of the last war, when even the bravest wavered. He concluded, "We went right through to the end."

That's all now. So long.

THE END